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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: NORTHERN CAUCASUS: INGUSHETIYA BOILS OVER, AGAIN

REF: MOSCOW 181

Classified By: DCM Daniel A. Russell. Reasons: 1.4 (B) & (D)

11. (C) Summary: Violence in Ingushetiya is growing, which threatens to have impact neighboring North Ossetiya and Kabardino-Balkariya. Following a week of violence, police on January 26 dispersed an unsanctioned opposition meeting, but not before demonstrators set fire to nearby buildings housing a hotel and a pro-government newspaper. Several journalists and human rights activists were beaten up and arrested. Another demonstration is planned for February 23 in Nazran and organizers promise that it will be joined by one in Moscow asking for Putin to intervene to bring stability to the republic. The question remains whether Ingushetiya President Murat Zyazikov's "success" in delivering the Republic's votes to the ruling party continues to buy him immunity from his incompetent rule. End summary.

Weekend Melee in Nazran  
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12. (SBU) While Chechnya experienced some much needed stability in 2007 (reftel), the situation in neighboring Ingushetiya has worsened considerably over the past several months, despite the introduction of an additional 2,500 federal Ministry of Interior troops there in late summer. In the latest development, police dispersed several hundred demonstrators January 26 who had gathered near the central square in Nazran to participate in an unsanctioned meeting. On January 25 the local Ingush branch of the Federal Security Service (FSB) had declared several districts of Nazran, the new capital of Magas and the village of Nesterovskaya as a "zone of counter-terrorist operation," in which demonstrations were banned, movement was restricted, and citizens were subject to identification checks. The local FSB claimed that a car-bomb that exploded in Nazran on January 22 had been meant to coincide with the planned January 26 demonstration to protest human rights abuses, local corruption and voting fraud in the December 2 Duma elections.

13. (SBU) According to press reports, at 10:30 some 150-200 participants, mainly young men, gathered near the square. Some had reportedly come armed with molotov cocktails. When the special forces police blocked access to the square, they responded by throwing stones and their petrol bombs. In the melee that followed, two nearby buildings housing the office of the local "Serdalo" newspaper and the Hotel Assa were set on fire. Damage to the hotel was less severe than to the newspaper's offices.

14. (SBU) Police arrested between 30 and 40 people, according to press reports, including at least ten journalists and human rights representatives covering the demonstration. Yevgeniy Buntman, an Ekho Moskvyy correspondent, confirmed that their correspondents Vladimir Varfolomeyev and Roman

Plyusov were among the group of journalists detained by police in Nazran on January 26. The group also included camera crews of Rossiya Channel and St. Petersburg-based Fifth Channel, and correspondents of Novaya Gazeta and Radio Liberty. According to Buntman, the authorities cited no reasons for the detention, searched the journalists personal belongings, questioned them about the purpose of the trip to Nazran and kept them in detention for about six hours. Later they were put on a bus and driven to Vladikavkaz with a military escort. Varfolomeyev reported on the air that the military escort was there to protect the journalists and that they were not being harassed. Danila Galperovich of Radio Liberty also said that the police did not use violence against them at any point.

15. (SBU) All of the journalists were released shortly after their arrival in Vladikavkaz. Novaya Gazeta Deputy Editor-in-Chief Andrey Lipskiy told us that after Novaya Gazeta arranged a meeting for its correspondent Olga Bobrova with Zyazikov and Ingushetiya's chief prosecutor, she stayed in Ingushetiya until January 27 investigating kidnappings and is currently in North Ossetiya. Correspondents from RIA-Novosti and the newspaper Zhizn were beaten up and arrested when they attempted to take photos of the burning newspaper office. They were eventually released on Sunday evening. According to Memorial, they were denied access to counsel, medical treatment, food and even water during their detention.

Situation in Ingushetiya has worsened since 2007  
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16. (SBU) The internet-based newspaper Caucasian Knot contends that the situation in Ingushetiya is already out of control and the Ingushetiya President Zyazikov does not have the support of authoritative leaders of family clans there. Zyazikov was already called to the carpet in Moscow by Putin on January 15 to discuss the worsening situation in Ingushetiya.

17. (SBU) Among a recent string of security incidents, on the evening of January 17, a ten-minute gunfight -- complete with automatic weapons fire and grenades -- occurred in Nazran near the home of Ingushetiya Prime Minister Ibrahim Malsagov. (Note: Press reports did not confirm that Malsagov was the target of the attack, but he did survive an August 2005 shooting in which his bodyguard died and he himself was wounded.) As a result of a failed January 31, 2007 assassination attempt on the mufti of Ingushetiya, security agencies from Ingushetiya and neighboring Chechnya and North Ossetiya carried out nine special operations in Ingushetiya during February and March 2007 in which nine suspected insurgents were killed.

18. (SBU) The situation continued to deteriorate in the summer, punctuated by murders of ethnic Russians and attacks on local Interior Ministry and FSB police. The introduction of additional federal police in July and August increased local resentment, culminating in a November 24 rally of several hundred people in Nazran which was broken up violently by the FSB. In the following months, Memorial reported that there have been almost daily attacks on security personnel as well as private citizens. On December 18, police arrested two young Ingush men, Ruslan Dzagiyeu and Bashir Kotiyev in connection with the August 13 bombing of the Nevskiy Express train between Moscow and St. Petersburg. Also on December 18, police arrested Ruslan Kesayev, who was wanted in connection with the December 9 bombing of a bus from Pyatigorsk to Stavropol.

19. (SBU) Unlike Chechnya, where the number of abductions has decreased dramatically, Memorial reported that during the first eight months of 2007, 22 persons were kidnapped in Ingushetiya -- almost the same number as in Chechnya, which has a much larger population. According to Memorial, people in Ingushetiya are seized in the streets by armed individuals in uniforms. Since Ingushetiya does not have a pretrial detention center, those detained end up in North Ossetiya

where torture is reportedly used to extract confessions. On June 25 in the village of Surkhakni and again on September 19 in Nazran, members of families whose sons had been abducted held rallies demanding that Zyazikov put an end to the indiscriminate killings of suspects by police and the practice of abducting Ingush men and taking them to neighboring republics.

¶10. (C) Sasha Petrov, Deputy Director of the Moscow office of Human Rights Watch believes the increased violence in Ingushetiya is a result of the influx there of Chechen and Ingush fighters who have either been pushed into the hills by the recent success of Chechen and federal troops to bring more stability to Chechnya, or fighters excluded from Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov's amnesty program. According to Petrov, the reason for the increase in attacks in Ingushetiya is that neither federal nor local troops have any accountability for their actions. This, according to Petrov, breeds more extremism. A Moscow-based newspaper reported on January 15 that according to sources within the FSB for Russia's southern region, the current number of insurgents in Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetiya is 620, who are organized into 46 groups. Petrov gave little credence to this number.

Zyazikov's Days as President May be Numbered  
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¶11. (SBU) Putin's overhaul of the Ingushetiya leadership has failed to deliver stability and Zyazikov's long-term viability is under question. In 2002 Putin replaced army general and Ingushetiya's first leader Ruslan Aushev with Zyazikov, who was then an FSB general. United Russia selected Zyazikov as its "locomotive" for Ingushetiya during the December Duma elections and he did not disappoint -- official results showed a turnout of 98.9 percent with almost all the votes for United Russia. However Ingushetiya is the only North Caucasus republic that lost deputies in the new Duma, going from three to only one. An internet-based "I Did Not Vote" campaign has resulted in over half of the voters in Ingushetiya saying that they did not vote in the December elections. In January a local court ruled that a lawsuit filed by the prosecutor in Ingushetiya against the NGO Golos Beslana (Voice of Beslan) claiming that statements on the NGO's website critical of Putin and the Russian government's reaction to the 2004 terrorist attack were "extremist" should be heard in North Ossetiya.

¶12. (SBU) It remains to be seen if Zyazikov will be able to weather these latest embarrassments, along with the worsening security situation that led Ramzan Kadyrov to offer additional Chechen police last September. But the Kremlin may be hard-pressed to come up with a successor to him, especially before the next big test, planned demonstrations in Nazran and Moscow on February 23 to mark the anniversary of the 1944 mass expulsion by Stalin of Ingush to Central Asia.  
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